21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4



and the ending are direct borrowings from the earlier play. In some ways it is more 'decadent' than the other. The hankering after sensational effect is seen in the author's making the hero and heroine children of a baboon, in the scene where the queen is shown to be in travail, and in the final scene where elephants are used, to make it more elaborate. But, in other ways this play is more artistic, for it has some effect of unity. In the *History*, the misfortune that befell the sister was unexplained and came without warning, but in this play, there is an atmosphere of impending tragedy. From the beginning, the audience is made to feel that in all probability, some disaster will befall the brother and sister, as they are children of an unnatural union. Whereas in the *History* the sister suffered through no fault of her own, our heroine here agrees to deceive the king, taking the risk of execution with open eyes, and commits the sin of incest.[1] Retribution is apparent, and this atmosphere of impending punishment makes the play quite artistic up to the point where the heroine is executed, notwithstanding the disjointed nature of the story taken as a whole. And there are scenes where dramatic irony is used with artistic effect. In one scene, the queen awakes after a bad dream and the king pretends to be still greatly in love with her, while the audience knows from his previous soliloquy that she is to be executed as soon as the child is born. In another, the brother approaches the hut singing and dancing in joy, little guessing that his sister has been executed. The scene where the king listens to the gossip of his subjects, is the most dramatic in the play. The stage is in darkness, the king moves and listens stealthily, and the atmosphere is tense and full of suspense. Then voices of the quarrelling couple are heard off-stage. They are envying the sudden good fortune of the hunter and his wife, little realizing that the objects of their envy

[1] To keep the blood as pure as possible, Burmese kings often married their half-sisters. This royal practice was not confined to Burma, but is also known in Siam, the East Indies, Peru when under the Incas, and Egypt under the Pharaohs (G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 324). But among the people, it has always been considered a sin and a crime to marry one's half-brother or sister. In this play, although the sister is a king's daughter and her husband is king, there is no doubt that the marriage between them is suggested to be incestuous.

To the end, the sister is in love with her half-brother husband. The Burmese decadent dramatists often take incestuous love between brother and sister for their themes, like the Elizabethan decadent playwrights. Cf. Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4



644 on such occa-
[643] sions the king appeared in the royal insignia, which otherwise only figure as emblems of state. The insignia in the illustrations are surmounted by a queen's crown (*sìbòn*). The shape of a king's crown is seen in Nos. 151 and 425. There
[346] being but a single palace and thousands of *kyaungs* and temples, the palace
[344] appears to resemble a *kyaung*. But the converse is the fact; the *kyaung* it is which in virtue of its religious character shares the distinction of the palace. The most recent style adopted by the Burman sovereigns was *Shin-Bayìn*—Lord of Lords. A chief title was *Sinbyû Shin*—Lord of the White Elephant. Every subject prostrated himself in the presence of the king, with face averted from the effulgence of the royal countenance. An official called *thandawzìn* used to repeat aloud the words uttered by the king. The ensign betokening the presence of the king and of the chief queen (*mìbayâ*) is the *tìbyû* (p. 101). Two to eight were borne according to the solemnity of the occasion. The chief queens were frequently half-sisters of the kings. For all the royal acts, the lying, rising, eating, speaking, there are euphemisms proper to the occasion; one of the most current of these is *shwèpawâdaw*—the golden foot. At his demise the sovereign is said to migrate to the abode of *nats* or delectable land; the staff of his *tìbyû* was broken. The paraphernalia of the king's service were elaborate; but in his attitude to the *yahán* he comported himself as an ordinary man. The Royal White Elephant was maintained in great pomp; it ate and drank out of golden vessels and had a retinue for its service. An elephant really white—probably an albino—was captured in 1805, but was pampered so that it died. A second was captured in 1806 which lived for fifty years. Other "white elephants" kept for state have enjoyed their reputation in virtue of possessing certain assumed criteria of the "white" variety, as to the number of the toes, direction of the tail-tuft and other distinctions, without regard to the colour of the skin.

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884. CARVED FIGURE OF NAT.

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644 Change of capital at the accession of a new sovereign was characteristic of
633 Burman empire, even when there was no change of dynasty or other political convulsion. Events of the latter kind were no doubt the original reasons of such changes. Next to Pagán, Sagáing, on the right bank of the Irawadi, facing the flat and now desolate site of Ava, is the most impressive of the